

“It is no longer enough to just provide peacekeepers; that must be accompanied by effective mediation, peacemaking and peacebuilding.”

-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton before the United Nations on Sept. 23, 2010.

What is peacebuilding?

Peacebuilding includes efforts related to preventing outbreaks of violence, transforming armed conflicts, finding peaceful ways to manage conflict, and creating the socio-economic and political conditions for sustainable development and peace. These efforts can include such diverse activities as:

- Back channel contact among parties at war
- Provision of mediation and other services in support of negotiations in ongoing peace processes
- Election monitoring and assistance with conducting elections
- Support for formal and informal justice initiatives, from training police, prosecutors and judges to assisting in the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions

What is the objective of peacebuilding?

The peacebuilding process facilitates the creation of a sustainable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing the causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political and economic improvement.

Who engages in peacebuilding?

While parties in conflicts themselves are the primary actors in peacebuilding, they are often supported by external actors, including individuals and groups. These can include diplomats, civil society organizations, religious institutions, the United Nations and other multi-lateral entities that have historically played critical roles.

Should the U.S. engage in peacebuilding activities?

According to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), it is essential that the U.S., working with the international community, play an active part in preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts. Fragile states, ethnic and religious strife, violent extremism, competition for scarce resources and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction all pose significant challenges to peace. The U.S. should encourage all available diplomacy and development capabilities to shape an international order that promotes a just peace.

How has the U.S. supported peacebuilding activities?

The U.S. government has been engaged in official diplomatic peacebuilding since our country was founded. Individuals and organizations have played prominent roles for well over a century. The history of the Nobel Peace Prize dates to 1901, and early recipients were often not government representatives, but private citizens. The growth of citizen involvement in peacebuilding significantly increased after World War II, and has developed rapidly in the last three decades. From the earliest days of mediation in conflicts by representatives of Quaker, Catholic and other religious groups, to the multi-faceted peacebuilding efforts of thousands of civil society organizations here in the U.S. and abroad, the field has expanded the depth and breadth of its contributions to reducing violence and transforming peace.

What is the role of civil society in peacebuilding?

Civil society groups are involved in peacebuilding work at the local, national and international level, including:

- Non-governmental Organizations directly involved in supporting a peace process or capacity building
- Human rights organizations working on social justice issues
- Women's & faith-based organizations
- Informational and educational groups, such as academic and media related institutions

By developing strong local and international networks, identifying best practices, and improving organizational capacities and skills, civil society is uniquely positioned to support initiatives that official diplomacy and economic programs cannot achieve independently.

Civil society also buttress peacebuilding processes and programs led by governments or the international community. The U.S. government relies on civil society organizations to work in hostile zones, implement peacebuilding programs, and often to confidentially engage with parties whom the government has chosen not to publicly acknowledge.

Additional Information about peacebuilding available at:

3D Security Initiative: <http://3dsecurity.org/>

Alliance for Peacebuilding: <http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/>

Beyond Intractability: <http://www.beyondintractability.org/>

Peace Appeal Foundation: <http://www.peaceappeal.org/>

U.S. Institute of Peace: <http://www.usip.org/>